

For Immediate Release:

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QUEER SPACE

Exhibition schedule: June 18—July 30, 1994

Gallery hours: Tuesday—Saturday 11—6 pm

Opening reception: June 18, 6—8 pm

In conjunction with the city-wide events celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Stonewall uprisings, *StoreFront for Art and Architecture* is pleased to announce the opening of *Queer Space*, a project which explores relationships among architecture, spatial practices and sexual-social identities.

Organized by StoreFront, in collaboration with a group of scholars and writers, *Queer Space* comprises a group exhibition at *StoreFront* and various public spaces; a manifesto publication of writings, drawings and projects, and a series of informal discussions at Café Architettura, a restaurant located around the corner from *StoreFront*.

Among the issues considered by the project are: 1) How do queer individuals and communities mark, appropriate, and otherwise resignify public and private spaces; 2) How are sexuality and social identity manifest in space and how, in turn, do spatial relations modulate forms of identity and community; 3) geographical and architectural dimensions of fantasy, fetish, habit, and ritual; 4) How normative codes of architecture regulate traces of bodily, particularly erotic, presence; and 5) How is space contested among diverse groups such that it is not only the setting of—but also the stakes of—social struggle.

Participants in the exhibition include artists and architects selected from responses to an open call. In the absence of any public and foundation support for *Queer Space*, the participants have financed their projects independently. The fourteen projects in the exhibition are:

Death Drive, by Michelle Fornabai, an installation which considers James Dean's fatal crash site and explores the notion of cult architecture. Her multi-media installation invites viewers to steal the evidence, real and fabricated fragments, from the crash site. For the opening night only *The Cross-Dressed Dumpster*, by Maura Sheehan, attempts to reconcile opposites by presenting a large dumpster, dented and beaten on the outside yet cleaned, primed and gilded within, a transformation into a 'walk-thru' space allowing participants to experience a chamber of light. *Queer Home*, by Blake Goble and Robert Ransick, proposes an erotic reverie on queer ancestries, a mixed-media

installation which recreates an adolescent's bedroom and a closet/passageway together with projected text commenting on queer history, sexuality, and the psychological space queerness occupies. REPOhistory, a collective of visual and media artists, writers, performers and educators, has created a series of street signs that explore some of the hidden histories and unmarked geographies implied in the title *Queer Space*. The signs will mark eight sites in New York City as *Queer Spaces* and "reclaim" important moments and places in the history of the city of the gay and lesbian community. Benjamin Gianni and Mark Robbins, in *Honey, I'm home*, is a series of photo panels that document diverse gay domestic arrangements. Paul Haslhofer and Greg Tuck, in *Colorado—an outing space*, provide a collection of hand-made 'shake 'n' snow' souvenirs dealing with homophobic legal regulation. Gordon Brent Ingram and Martha Judge will present "Open" "Space" a photographic installation that explore relationships and differences among gay male and lesbian experiences of public sex. Tom Kalin's video, entitled *Confirmed Bachelor*, by throwing petals and blossoms at a series of fundamentalists ravings culled from 'The Gay Agenda'—the tape allows the language of medical pathology to dissolve into absurdity right before our eyes. Adam Kuby will install a public bench outside StoreFront entitled *Gays Only/Straights Only* to address sexual apartheid and queer [in]visibility. Jürgen Mayer's *Housewarming*, is an installation that treats architectural surfaces with heat-sensitive paint to register bodily traces. Brian McGrath's installation *GayDar Maps*, is an acoustic mapping of erotically charged urban spaces. *Queer Projections: an Audio Remapping of New York* by Mitchell Owen and Charles Renfro is a series of interviews with gay city dwellers in the form of audio cassette tapes for sale at the gallery. *Imaging AIDS: Diagnosis*, by Rocco Giannetti, refers to socially prohibited sites of the body, which are represented as images for re-examination, to dispute the claimed objectivity of science and medicine. Jay Critchley's *Over The Rainbow Rubbers* are specially designed safer sex kits recreating cultural icons and symbols for sex positive messages. The entire exhibition at StoreFront will be designed by Paul Lewis, Peter Pelsinski and Marc Tsuiumaki from *Operatives*.

Queer Space has been organized by StoreFront for Art and Architecture in collaboration with Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Professor of English at Duke University and author of *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosexual Desire*, *Epistemology of the Closet*, and *Tendencies*; Beatriz Colomina, Assistant Professor at the School of Architecture, Princeton University, author of *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media*, and editor of *Sexuality and Space*; Dennis Dollens is editor of *SITES Architecture Magazine* and the author of *Josep Maria Jujol: Five Major Buildings*; Cindi Patton, Professor of Literature at Temple University and author of *Sex and Germs* and *Inventing AIDS*; Henry Urbach, Ph.D. candidate in architectural history and theory at Princeton University, and author of essays published or forthcoming in *SITES*, *Queers in Space*, *Design Book Review* and *Stud*; and Mark Wigley, Assistant Professor at the School of Architecture, Princeton University, author of *The Architecture of Deconstruction: Derrida's Haunt* and editor of *Assemblage 20: VIOLENCE SPACE*.

With *Queer Space* StoreFront hopes to provoke a lively dialogue among architects, artists, viewers, and members of various communities about issues of socio-spatial concern. According to StoreFront's founding director Kyong Park, "StoreFront's mission is not to prescribe points of view, but to invite alternative thinking by creative people and the general public alike. We are very consciously devoted to a degree of openness and mutuality that is not customarily part of the agenda of the art and architecture establishments. Our mandate is also to offer creative people opportunities to actually make new work, whether alone or in collaboration, and to generate conversation and constructions across geographical and ideological boundaries."

Enclosed you will find a statement by the organizing committee and further information is available in StoreFront's newsletter.

June 7, 1994

SOMETHING ABOUT SPACE IS QUEER

In one of our earliest discussions we began with the phrase "all space is queer," which was soon qualified and elaborated in order to arrive at some coherent call for works, initially in the form of art, text or architectural proposals. Our goal was to raise a series of questions by presenting some individual readings of being queer in space while at the same time challenging stereotypical views of queered space and of queers occupying, writing and designing both literal and literary space. The results of this call are now installed both in and around StoreFront for Art and Architecture and in the streets of the city. We invite you to gauge its success and participate in the ongoing discussion.

Our concern was to open the question of queer space up rather than pin it down aesthetically or conceptually. What became clear from the group discussions and looking at the fifty-something proposals were the complications and contradictions hidden within our working premise. These were captured eloquently by the manifesto that carried the line "I am queer space." It placed our assertion that "all space is queer" fully into a social context. The radical use of "I" highlights the entanglement of subjectivity and space while nullifying any objectification of space in general—liberating both queerness and space from the repressive weight of stereotypes whose end result is always violence. Queerness is not simply a property of certain subjects or certain spaces or certain relationships between them. While all space may be queer, that queerness is not necessarily related to the way that it is occupied. Not even specifically queer space is always queer. The "transitional" or "marginal" spaces often occupied by "queers" are not necessarily themselves queer. The queerness of space often surfaces under what seems to be the least queer conditions. At the very least, queer identity (and all forms of identity have their queer sites and moments) involves transactions with both the queerness of space and its repression.

To think about queer space is to rethink that terms "queer" and "space." Is "queer" a kind of irreducible strangeness, the repressed condition of apparently stable entities, the uncanniness of everyday life? Or does "queer" refer to the term of gay and lesbian self-identification that reemerged around 1990 to describe a new constellation of sexual-social-political identities? And likewise, with "space": do we mean physical space? Or do we mean the space of discursive practices, texts, codes of behaviour and regulatory norms that organize social life? Throughout this project, we have tried to keep all these senses and to highlight the different kinds of bond between them. For us, such a rethinking of the politics of space has become an urgent priority. The built environment can no longer be exempted from a sustained interrogation on these issues.

Such an interrogation must involve multiple interventions into both specific spaces and the various institutions that sustain them. A whole array of institutional practices seek to regulate queerness by defining it in a way that allows it to be either excluded from a space or included within it. These definitions have to be contested. To think about how queerness is reflected, embodied, denied, or sustained in spatial form requires a whole different understanding of space, one made possible by new alliances between architects, artists, activists and cultural critics.

In the end, this small exhibition can do little more than point to the enigmas of queer space by presenting individual challenges and images, works that break down violent stereotypes and open up different ways of thinking, different forms of action. Hopefully, this is just the beginning of a very long campaign to rethink and reactivate queer space. 3

Beatriz Colomina, Dennis Dollens, Eve Sedgwick, Henry Urbach, Mark Wigley